

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT



IN CHARGE OF
LAVINIA L. DOCK

THE CONFERENCE IN PARIS

WITH the arrival of the New Year we begin to have visions of steamer tickets dancing before our eyes and are anxious to get other preoccupations swept out of the way in order to be ready for Paris. The Conference will convene in Paris about the middle of June (the precise day is not yet quite certain), and will last for, probably, three days, with a morning and afternoon session each day. As to the programme, the subject of Practical Training will be presented by such eminent matrons as Miss Stewart, Miss Huxley, and Miss Nutting, while contributory reports on the progress of practical teaching in the countries where it is now in process of development will be given by our sisters from Germany, Holland, France, and Italy. A whole day will doubtless be needed to do this subject justice and allow time for discussion. The theme of Professional Organization will occupy all of another, for in this connection there is much to hear and to tell, including, as it will, the story of the nursing press, which has been the chief engine of nursing progress in many nations, and gives us so much to be proud of. In this connection we must hear from the Leagues and Alumnæ, the state and national and the international associations, of their progress, and give, no doubt, some time to talking over the affairs of those countries where organization has barely begun, as in France and Italy.

On the third day we hope to take up some of the lines of nursing which may rightly be called Public Health problems, such as the modern efforts to reduce infant mortality, the pure milk distribution, public school nursing, the share of the nurse in the war against infections, tuberculosis, etc., military and naval services, sanitary inspection under health boards, visiting nursing among the poor, etc. We hope to have enlightening discussions on all these topics, showing a consensus of what is being done in all countries. There will also be time given to visiting the French hospitals, and Miss Mollett, who is better than a first-rate guide, is arranging for trips of combined pleasure and instruction around

beautiful Paris for the English nurses, and we are sure she will let all the others go, too. It is not yet quite certain where the meetings will be held, but that will soon be arranged and announced.

We remind all nurses again that this conference is informal and open to all, that no formal credentials will be required. All will be welcome to come and join in the discussions. A paper that will no doubt be interesting to many of our foreign sisters will be one offered by Miss Van Vollenhoven, a Holland nurse who has made her way in America, and will deal with the question, "The Opportunities for Foreign Nurses in America."

We hope to see a large number of the nurses from European countries. Miss Turton and Miss Baxter have promised to come, if their engagements permit, from Italy; Dr. Anna Hamilton will surely be there from Bordeaux; the Holland nurses' association will be represented; Sister Agnes Karll will be there from Berlin, unless she is at that time occupying a position in the Ministerium; some of the Danish nurses are coming, and almost all our good old English friends will be there. Moreover, in Paris is an enormous nursing population in the large hospitals, and we are already receiving the kindest assurances of good-will and interest from their representatives. Mme. Gillot, the editor of the *Bulletin*; Mlle. Chaptal, prominent in many kinds of public service, and Mme. Alphen-Salvador, we know will meet us with kindness. Then, too, there are one or two groups of American and English nurses living in Paris.

A BOOK OF NURSING STATISTICS

A book of remarkable value and importance in nursing history and development has lately been written by a member of the Austrian parliament.* The author, a layman, writes from the standpoint of the social reformer. He begins by quoting Dr. E. von Leyden, who has said that "nursing is now generally recognized in its full importance, and, especially in the last few years, it has risen to the position of an indispensable and distinct specialty of medicine." Von Lindheim argues from these words that, with a view to proper care of the sick poor and the good of the community, it becomes the immediate responsibility of the state to secure for this specialty the utmost consideration and to surround it with favorable conditions. He then considers the economic conditions of modern life and deplores the entrance of so many women into business

* *Saluti agrorum: Aufgabe und Bedeutung der Krankenpflege im Modernen Staat.* Alfred von Lindheim, Leipsic, 1905.

and shops, where they displace men. He sees in the proper development of nursing an outlet for the activity of a large body of women, and argues that on this ground also it is important that the state shall see that the conditions in nursing work are not dangerous to life or health, and that it should be made worth while for intelligent women to enter into this profession. From the starting-point of these propositions, he has made a statistical study of conditions in Austria and Germany, to establish, if possible, the numbers and comparative sufficiency of nurses in relation to the population and to the number of hospital beds, also the proportion of the latter to the population, and to estimate the safety of nursing as an occupation in comparison with other occupations.

From his investigations he concludes (quite rightly, we think) that nursing is not more dangerous than any other calling *provided* that the nurses are chosen with care, and that proper care and foresight prevail in the conditions of work. His statistics are, however, many of them, eloquent with the absence of proper care and conditions.

There is a vague tradition heard once in a while in America, to the effect that the life of a nurse averages ten years. No one who repeats it knows where it comes from,—it seems to be totally contradicted by our experience of thirty odd years, and it is certainly not true of English nursing. But since making some personal study of conditions I have not a doubt that this gloomy saying originated with good cause in Middle Europe, and von Lindheim's statistics bring much to the support of this conclusion. He says that in Austria and Germany nurses show an average mortality twice as great as that of other women of about the same age. In analyzing his mortality tables, he finds that the highest mortality is among the Catholic Sisters of Mercy. There are certain orders having from seventy to one hundred per cent. of deaths from tuberculosis. Taking all of the Catholic nursing orders in the German-speaking countries, the average mortality from tuberculosis is sixty-three per cent. This mortality is greatest among the young Sisters, and greater in proportion to their youth—that is, a larger proportion of the very young Sisters die, than of the older ones. Besides the mortality, he gives tables of sickness and disability which are astounding. In one year's time, for every one hundred Catholic Sisters, so many days are lost through sickness or complete invalidism as to make 15.28 years lost, with an average of 39.4 days to each illness. Among these illnesses infectious disease showed a place with 28.07 per cent.; stomach diseases, 14.02 per cent.; diseases of lungs and respiratory organs, 38.59 per cent. He gives the morhidity and mortality among Deaconess orders, Red Cross and other secular orders as greatly less than the

Catholic Sisters, but says that as members of these associations are free to leave, it is possible that many return to their homes and are thus lost to these special statistics.

He gives four reasons as accounting for the high morbidity and mortality among the religious orders: 1. Probationers are taken too young, and often in delicate health or with inherited disease. 2. Unhygienic conditions of living. 3. The stooped or cramped attitude which narrows the lungs, and the unhygienic dress. 4. Overwork and exhaustion. He says further these high figures do not stop with the nursing orders, but apply equally to the orders where other pursuits are followed. He concludes, solely on physiological grounds, that probationers should not be admitted to training before twenty-one or twenty-two years at the least, as below this age the direct danger to health proportionately increases.

His census of nurses in institutions in Germany in 1900 is as follows: 24,317 Catholic Sisters; 1,292 Catholic Brothers; 12,438 Deaconesses; 1,731 Protestant Brothers; 1,448 Red Cross nurses; 1,423 other non-religious associations; 40,000 "Wärter" and "Wärterinnen" (attendants, or paid untrained hospital nurses).

He gives many interesting illustrations of the dangers of an overworked and untaught nursing service, among others an epidemic of typhoid fever which occurred in the general hospital at Graz, Austria. Here a single typhoid case was admitted, who was confided to the care of two Sisters. Through lack of knowledge of the details of practical disinfection, they took the disease themselves, and, still through neglect of cleanliness, they infected in turn fifteen other Sisters and one probationer, two attendants, one scrubber, and one store-helper, who in turn infected four of the other patients in the hospital.

He concludes his book with an earnest appeal for careful and thorough-going statistics in all civilized countries, to show the weak points and strengthen the claim which he makes for government supervision of nursing education and conditions.

WORK AND OVERWORK

From what I have seen and heard in Central Europe (to leave out other countries on the Continent), I should not place overwork and exhaustion last in the list of four reasons for an excessive disease and death rate, as von Lindheim does. The overwork required of nurses (not to speak of other classes of working women) is hideous and inhu-

man. While it is not, of course, in itself more cruel than overwork of factory and shop employees, and not to compare with the cruel overwork of children in some good Christian countries, yet it seems more surprising for this reason: wage earners and child slaves work for greedy, unscientific lay employers, of whom it may be said that they know not what they do; but nurses work for physicians,—men of science, and of a science which is based on a knowledge of the human body. The physicians of Germany and Austria are especially famed for their knowledge and their science—as a matter of fact, they teach the whole world medicine—and these learned men are guilty of many sins toward the nurses who work for them, and who are, as I well know, the most faithful, untiring, self-forgetting of women in their devotion to duty.

I have recounted the general system of hospital hours in Austria as found in the General Hospital at Vienna,—twenty-four hours duty every other twenty-four hours, with a broken duty in between. This is the regulation system of Austria, with few exceptions. And I have heard much of the personal experiences of the German nurses in hospitals. In general, the customary hour for rising is five A.M., and the time for going off duty six, eight, or nine P.M. The numerous printed articles and reports show these hours to be usual in the Deaconess institutions, and night duty is often done in this way—no regular set of night nurses, as we have, but the day nurses take turns in dividing the night, one remaining on until one A.M. and another coming on then until the morning. Both continue their work through the whole day before and after without extra time off.

Certain Deaconess institutions then began a system of a regular set of night nurses, and I have read long and most amusingly serious disquisitions by good pastors as to which was the best plan. Personal instances always sound more lifelike, and I shall repeat a little of what different nurses have told me. Sister —— was a pupil ten years ago in the old Charité. (Things are better now in the new Charité.) She rose at five and was on duty every day until nine P.M. Once a week she had a full night duty without any rest before or after, remaining on duty the next day until the regular hour of nine P.M. This was in her *Lehr-zeit* (pupilage), and it was thought that this “hardened” them and weeded out the incompetents. Many of the victims saved themselves by sleeping on duty, but Sister —— was conscientious to her last fibre, and stayed awake, though it almost killed her. They had three months of this.

Sister —— was trained in a Red Cross institution, which placed her in a municipal hospital in a small town. Here also the nurses rose

at five A.M. Every third night each one had a full night duty. However, before going on at night they had a couple of hours off, and the next day they came off duty at six instead of nine P.M.

In this hospital (this was also ten or twelve years ago) the nurses, of whom there were about fifteen, did all, absolutely all, of the housework and ward-cleaning—corridors, floor washing, walls and window washing—in the whole hospital. The only parts of the work of the establishment which were not required of them were the cooking and distribution of food, and the laundry work. I am not sure about the dish-washing.

Sister —, who was a dear soul, with lots of fun in her, told me about this. She said: "Oh, I worked so gladly there! I was young and strong, I found nothing too hard. I am only sorry that we were taught nothing. We had no instruction at all, because the chief medical director did not wish that we should be taught. He said it was right for us to work. That was enough for us."

"But," I said, "you had a matron in that hospital. Could she not teach you?"

"Oh, no!" (with wide-open eyes) "not without the doctor. He ordered everything, and looked into the bath-tubs and utensils. If they were not clean enough, he made us do them over again. The matron could say nothing."

Other nurses have told me the same thing about the matrons under whom they worked: that they were not allowed to teach or exert their own initiative; everything was under the absolute dictation of the men in authority.

This elimination of the matron (superintendent, as we would call her) struck me in many parts of the continent, even in good little Denmark, but as I studied the question I came to understand it better. It bewildered me at first. The men everywhere were little kings, and ruled their little kingdoms with unlimited despotism. Naturally, they could not endure the thought of a woman being in position to dispute or divide their authority. She must only obey. While this is true of medical chiefs, it is not limited to them, for many hospitals had lay officials who were even worse. For instance, in the city hospitals the nurses were sometimes under the direct disciplining and ordering of some sub-official, who knew nothing of anything, except to be arrogant and peremptory.

The matron and housework questions are also most interestingly set forth in print. A big, three-volume encyclopædia, covering the whole subject of nursing, is to be found in a foreign tongue, but out of

kindness I will not mention the authors' names. What the matron shall be allowed to do is discussed through ten pages with the greatest energy,—almost feverish in its intensity. The queer thing is that the achievements of Miss Nightingale and her wonderful reforms are all quoted and expounded, and due credit given her therefor, and then the conclusions are with many long words arrived at, that it is preferable that the matrons shall *not* teach the nurses even practical work, as it is, on the whole, advisable to leave that all to the medical staff, and that it is advisable *not* to hand over any teaching of ethics to her, as that is preferably to be left to the physician. The housework question is discussed in eight pages, and in a style as ponderous and important as if the discovery of some new disorder was being reported. The gist of it all is that the men did not know how to organize a house-maid service which should be distinct from the nursing service. It bothered them to think of two sets of women under their orders, for how, in fact, was the physician to tell whether he had house-maid or nurse under his eyes? Besides, they would clash over their duties, therefore it was best to have only one set of women, and have them perform all duties. Besides, there were notable authorities (men) who stated that housework was a pleasant change from the monotony of attending the sick. The funny thing about it was that while masculine authorities were all quoted and their opinions compared with most painstaking care, such a thing as going to some nurse and saying: "Now, you are actually doing this,—what is your opinion?" never once entered into the mind of the scientific investigators. My conscience rather pricks me for thus holding up the learned professors to ridicule, for there is no doubt they are the most learned and often the most likable of men, paternal and benevolent in their despotism.

It is only fair to add that these opinions are already becoming antiquated (though they were written not so many years ago), and that in the organization of the magnificent new hospitals now being erected in Germany they are entirely discarded. But they are of historical interest, and their practical results are seen in many countries. One such result is that there is now an actual shortage of matrons who know how to teach, organize, and progress, so that enlightened modern directors who desire to develop the nursing department are embarrassed by this deficiency.

The nursing history of every country in Europe has most conclusively shown that where men wield the sole authority they are only able to bring the work of women up to a certain point of efficiency, and that beyond this point they cannot go, because their influence is repres-

sive, and they cannot attract the best talent by a repressive policy. It was Miss Nightingale's highest achievement to demonstrate this, and to prove that when their legitimate share of authority and responsibility was handed over to women they were able to carry the efficiency of the nursing service steadily forward, and to make it, in fact, capable of indefinite development. In more than one foreign country the most intelligent men now realize that their own egoistic methods have deprived them of the very assistants whose help they are now conscious of needing.

ITEMS

TURKEY has good training schools for nurses at Marsovan, Beirut, and the English hospitals in Tiberias and Damascus, with three years courses.

MEMBERS of Parliament visited the poorest districts of Ireland last summer, and were deeply impressed with the work of the district nurses in those regions, and the extent of their influence.

MISS AMY TURTON has recently spent some time at Bordeaux, studying the methods there, preparatory to undertaking some new work at Rome, where a training-school on modern methods is in project. Miss Turton has promised to send us some details of this new plan.

THE National Council of Women of France has demanded that women should be appointed on commissions dealing with the care of dependent classes, and this request has recently had the gratifying result that two women, Mme. Bogelot and Mme. Perouse, have been placed on the Higher Council of the Board for Poor Relief and Hygiene.

In connection with the Eighth International Conference of the Red Cross Society to be held in London in May, 1907, there will be an exposition of appliances and inventions for the relief of the sick and wounded in war. Three prizes will be awarded for the most useful inventions of the kind from the fund of £10,000 given by the Empress Maria Feodorovna for the purpose.

THE graduate nurses from Dr. Anna Hamilton's hospital in Bordeaux, which is organized on the English system, with a nurse superintendent and teacher, are leavening the whole mass, like the first Nightingale nurses and those of Bellevue Hospital in its early days, for they are taking positions in other places and other hospitals as head nurses,

superintendents, and organizers. The Tondou school, which is the daughter of that at Bordeaux, has lately graduated ten nurses.

THE German Nurses' Association continues to grow, and the number of calls and opportunities crowding upon it for new hospital work almost overwhelms Sister Agnes, who has continually the work of three people heaped upon her. The "Free Sisters," with their educational standards and their self-governing principle, their rejection of all bonds save those imposed by their responsibility to the sick, are on the upward curve of progress, and constitute the coming force in German nursing history.

THE English National Council of Nurses has lately held a very interesting exhibition and conference on the care of the consumptive, on mental nursing, and on maternity nursing. The exhibit included everything known to modern science and ingenuity in the most approved care of these three classes of patients, and appropriate lectures were given and discussions held by experts on these lines. Among the exhibits were fifteen articles designed and invented by nurses. The meetings were most successful, interesting, and instructive.

THEY seem to have had a very bad time at the Nurses' Hostel in London, which is much to be regretted. The difficulties arose over the telephone service and the nurses' calls, for, while all calls and messages were claimed to be given to residents, the hostel did not undertake to carry on the directory business as a regular directory would do. The situation appears to have been aggravated by dictatorial methods on the part of the directors, and the lesson seems to be that only in proper regard for the rights and the personality of all is successful coöperation founded.

THE *Assistance publique* is about to build on vacant land near the Salpêtrière a school for nurses, in which young women of good character and education will be trained on the English plan. The training will last three years. Almost next door to this institution will be built the new hospital of La Pitié, so that the student-nurses will have a field of labor close at hand. Seventy-five probationers will be received each year, and, for the first two years, residence in the school will be required. The experiment is the outcome of visits paid to England by French physicians, who are enthusiastic over the devotion and skill of the British nurses.

NONE are occupying themselves more definitely with practical educational questions than the Australians. They now have tests to prove

the technical fitness of matrons, and are going seriously into the domestic study problem. Miss Glover says:

The time will come when every hospital kitchen will be put in charge of a sister, just as a ward is now, and no matron will be appointed but those who are certificated housewives, as well as certificated nurses. The domestic probationer will be as important in her way as a nursing "pro," and then hospital management will take its proper position in the education of the nurse. These changes will come gradually, but the young nurse will do well to fill up her time before going into a general hospital by taking up these extra subjects of domestic economy, hygiene, sanitation, and, last but by no means least, dietetics and cookery.

DR. ALICE L. ERNST, who superintends the Mary S. Ackerman Hoyt Hospital at Jhansi, U. P., India, writes:

We have recently broken our record in the number of patients who have come to us for medical help. Fourteen of them were obliged to find accommodation on the verandas of the hospital, as our beds in the wards were not sufficient for the number.

We have engaged a most capable native medical assistant, Miss Catherine James, who occupies furnished quarters in our commodious "Nurses' Home." Her salary is to be three hundred dollars a year, but she is fully worth this, as we have employed her in the past and know that she is to be depended upon. She is such an earnest Christian that she will be active in the spiritual part of our work.

We need her support that she may be our permanent assistant. There surely must be some child of God at home who will assume this salary, that we may secure such an important helper in our medical work?

PROBABLY no article written by a nurse has ever had more widespread interest shown in it, or been more widely translated, than Miss Isla Stewart's paper on the Twentieth Century Matron, which was read a year ago before the Matron's Council. It has been eagerly seized on by progressive nurses in all the countries where the Matron is either non-existent or of limited powers, and has been translated into French, German, Danish, and Dutch. The countries where it has been taken most matter-of-factly are those where matrons have already been developed on the lines she pictured, but it will undoubtedly have an immense influence in assisting the growth of a model leadership in the new nursing schools of conservative countries, where the rightful position and proper authority of the matron have been jealously pruned down almost to nothing.

"If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone. A man, sir, should keep his friendship in a constant repair."—*Johnson*.